The Scythians

Open your Bible to Ezekiel 38.

Verses 1-3,***"And the word of the LORD came unto me*** [Ezekiel]***, saying, Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him, And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal:"***

We still have to identify who Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal is, but I want to give you the highlights as a review of what we've covered.

I started the last message with President Regan's speech (prior to his presidency) in 1971 where he said,

> ***"Ezekiel tells us that Gog, [referring to Magog], the nation that will lead all of the other powers of darkness against Israel, will come out of the north. Biblical scholars have been saying for generation that Gog must be Russia. What other powerful nation is to the north of Israel? None. But it didn't seem to make sense before the Russian revolution, when Russia was a Christian country. Now it does, now that Russia has become communistic and atheistic, now that Russia has set itself against God. Now it fits the description of Gog perfectly."***

He might have been President of the United States, but he sure got this wrong.

> ***It has been mistakenly believed that the ancient nation of "Magog" in western Asia Minor was the ancient "tribal name" of the "Scythians," a group of Iranian speaking nomadic tribes from Central Asia north of Iran that traveled across the Russian steppes*** [that is not true either]***, and came to live in the territory north of the Black Sea.***

That is important to remember and is the mistake eschatologists make - and not just eschatologists, but others too that have dabbled in this particular chapter without doing their homework; that the ancient nation of Magog in Asia Minor was the ancient tribal name of the Scythians.

> ***Then, in turn, and again in error, it has been believed that the ancient Scythians were the progenitors of the modern Russians. Within academia today, there are no professional archeologists or historians who associate Magog with the Scythians, or the Scythians with the Russians.*** [...] ***a group of Scandinavian Viking traders called the Rus began the Russian state around 800 AD. These Rus eventually founded the first Russian state centered in Kiev in today's Ukraine, and gave their name to Russia. There***

is neither a genetic nor a cultural connection between the Scythians and the Russians.

Where did the idea begin that Magog begat the Scythians?

It began with one very questionable sentence written by the First Century AD Jewish historian, Josephus in his book The Antiquity of the Jews.

The sentence says the Greeks called the "Magogites" the "Scythians" despite the fact that the Greeks did not call the Magogites the Scythians.

In one line Josephus says the Greeks identified the Scythians with Magog, but then a few lines later Josephus using the Hebrew word for the Scythians, "Ashchenaz," says the Greeks identified "Ashchenaz" with Rhegium, which was a port city of Southern Italy. The names "Scythians" and "Ashchenaz" are just English and Hebrew transliterations of the Greek name, Skythes for the same nomadic people.

One can only speculate how and why these obviously wrong statements are in Josephus' book. Were these inaccurate statements the products of Josephus' imagination, or where they the result of alterations to the few copies of Josephus' work that existed in the first century? Maybe Josephus was using the word "Magog" as a generic term for any fierce people coming down from the north. Whatever the reason, the statements don't reflect that the ancient Asia Minor nation, referred to as "Ashkenaz" or "Ashchenaz" in the Hebrew of the Old Testament, is in fact the same nation or people the Greeks called the "Scythians".

We can find the Ashkenaz references in Genesis 10 and Jeremiah 51.

Those who have relied on the erroneous statements found in Josephus about Magog and the Scythians must recognize the simple fact that the Scythians and the Ashkenaz are not separate nations. In truth, they are one and the same.

Finally, this deception about the Russian invasion of Israel was first popularized in the 19th century. [The 1800's] ***A book written by a pastor at the time seems to contain a purposeful misquote of a statement about a city in Magog made by the highly regarded first century AD Roman historian Pliny. In his multi-volume work called The Natural History, Pliny identifies the ancient Lydian city of Hierapolis as being part of Magog.***

In the book The Destiny of Nations by another nineteenth century pastor, one of those credited with being the author and popularizer of the Bible interpretation [that most believe as truth] ***that calls for Russia invading Israel, we read, "Pliny says 'Hierapolis taken by the Scythians was afterward called Magog." We can see Pliny's statement has been misquoted***

or misunderstood in a way that makes it seem that Magog was related to the Scythians rather than the Lydians. Unfortunately, this same misquote of Pliny has been carried forward in time and appears in Hal Lindsey's book The Late Great Planet Earth.

I already told you who the Scythians were, but I am going to back that up, give you some general information. The Lost Tribes of Israel were part of the Scythians. So if they are the Lost Tribes of Israel, and if they are Magog in the time that Ezekiel was told to write this down for a future time (from that point on up to today), then Israel is going to fight the House of Judah in this Gog-Magog War. If Gog in the land of Magog are Scythians, in a sense, it is going to be their version of the Civil War we had here in the United States of America, and, they won't even know it. But that is not what is going to happen either.

It is this error which incorrectly relates Magog to the Scythians, who were erroneously believed to be progenitors of Russia that led President Ronald Regan and others to refer to the Soviet Union as an "evil empire" and "the focus of evil in the modern world."

Let me tell you, there is a certain level of evil in every government in the modern world today; even here in the United States of America, which is part of the Lost Tribes. No matter how much you want to disguise it as a good government-ran country, I've got news for you, there is plenty of evil. More now than ever. President Ronald Regan just couldn't recognize what Scripture says. In the last days we will deal with the 8th Beast. So this Gog of the land of Magog that Israel will deal with would have to be part of the 8th Beast—and which the Book of Revelation has plenty to say about.

The identification of Magog with Lydia and not Scythia is consistent with the ancient texts of the Assyrians, who at various times were either the allies or the foes of the Scythians yet had peaceful dealing with the Lydians.

What I have given you and what most people have today is only a general history of the beasts. The Assyrian Empire (see map) had major control of the area in dark green. They came and took the ten tribes of the House of Israel into bondage through several different waves during the early 8th century B.C. and exiled them in the general area within Iraq, northwestern Iran, and southern Turkmenistan as we know it today. But as the lost ten tribes became known as Scythians, they dispersed themselves between the Black Sea and Caspian Sea, and also on the eastward boundaries of the Caspian Sea on up through Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan, eventually meeting up above and between the Black Sea and the

Caspian Sea areas of southern Russia, Georgia, Armenia, and so forth of today. They became a force of their own.

The assumption (because we don't really get that deep into history, even those who preach on the beasts of the Old Testament) is that the Assyrian Empire became internally weakened or corrupt and was beginning to collapse on itself at the same time the Babylonian Empire had become more developed and stronger, and then the Babylonians just came in and totally wiped out the Assyrian Empire overcoming them by military power and force. To a certain degree that is true, but the ten tribes (known as Scythians) were gaining in their own little power structure up in the section they were dispersed to. And depending on which historians you want to believe, they broke up into three different groups (I believe it is three, some say two). Those groups would come together on occasion and just pound the Assyrian Empire. They were once their slaves but they became free. Then they regrouped between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, and north of that, and they became a little mighty force within themselves that kept pounding the Assyrians, almost like what we hear the Barbarians did to Europe, to Rome. They kept getting into all kinds of scuffles with the Assyrian Empire. In fact, they went up against the Assyrian Empire three different times in three different battles and they won, not the Assyrians. Now the Scythians were not looking to take over the area of the Assyrian Empire; they didn't want to come and conqueror, they just wanted to stay (as they thought at that time) in that general area they were in and not go back down there anymore. Well God's Word said they wouldn't and they didn't. Whether they realize it or not, God was in control of history. Long story short, the Scythians are what weakened the Assyrian Empire. Then as the Babylonian Empire gained strength, it was easy pickins. Most people, if any, have never heard that the Assyrian Empire crumbled within themselves because eventually toward the end of their empire they were getting attacked from both the north and the south, from the north by the Scythians and from the south by the Babylonian Empire.

> ***The identification of Magog with Lydia and not Scythia is consistent with the ancient texts of the Assyrians, who at various times were either the allies or the foes of the Scythians yet had peaceful dealing with the Lydians. The identification of Magog as Lydia, and not Scythian is also consistent with the writings of the ancient historian Herodotus (ca 490-424 BC), a Greek who was born in, lived in, and traveled throughout all of ancient Asia Minor. Herodotus, who is considered the Father of History, wrote detailed information about the three different Scythian tribes*** [some say two] ***and the ten different tribes that neighbored them, including their ever changing and opportunistic alliances. Herodotus says that Magog (Lydia), as led by the historical figure Gog (Gyges to the Greek, Gugu to the Assyrians) and the Scythians, were in fact enemies! In Gyges of Lydia we have the leader the Assyrians called "Gugu, King of Ludu," and "Gugu of Magugu," the Bible's Gog of Magog.***
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> ***The Bible interpretation calling for a Russian invasion of Israel was framed at a time when little was known about Magog, the Scythians, or Russian origins. Many who have held to this interpretation have also tried to understand who the other countries listed in Ezekiel 38-39 were (Meshech, Tubal, Gomer, Togarmah). Some have associated Magog and/or***

> ***Rosh with Russia, some also erroneously associate Meshech with the Russian city of Moscow, and Tubal with the Siberian city of Tobolsk. Promoted by the 1909 and the 1917 editions of the Scofield Reference Bible, these erroneous associations are representative of a type of arm chair "name game" archeology that was quite popular during the eighteenth and nineteenth century.***
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> ***For decades archeologists and historians have known that neither Magog, nor the Scythians, nor any of the ancient nation referred to in Ezekiel 38-39, could possibly have had anything to do with the origins of the modern Russians.***
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> ***The first Russian were a people of a different racial stock, linguistic stock, cultural stock, and time than the Scythians. Based on excavations and historical records, archeologists and historians are absolutely sure that the progenitors of the modern Russians were the Scandinavians who border the Russians on the northwest. We know that Russia did not develop population centers until around 800AD. By that time, the Scythians had died out*** [long gone]***, and the ancient nations of Asia Minor referred to in Ezekiel 38-39, (Magog, Meshech, Tubal, Gomer, and Togarmah) all had ceased to exist.***

Some may question, "Are you sure the Ten Tribes are the Scythians? After all, I've never heard anything like that. What makes you the expert?"

I never claimed to be an expert. I only claim to be a person that keeps digging and digging until I find the truth. You can call that what you want to call it. Most of these Gog and Magog War theories taught out there are based on one line in Josephus. My personal opinion about that is I think it was copied wrong, but that doesn't really matter. It was not the set time, not even in the early 1800's, for the truth to be exposed. I believe it was not until 1948 and 1967 when one could possibly lay out all the timelines and look back and see what God has already accomplished and says wow, if this is not faith building, then what is? God keeps His Word.

Who were these Scythians? Here is a little introduction on the Scythians.

> ***The ten tribes of Israel essentially vanished from their former Kingdom of Israel by circa 721 BC. They had been a powerful kingdom in the Eastern Mediterranean region for centuries prior to that time. They had been allied to the city-states of Tyre, Sidon, etc. in what historians now call the Phoenician Empire. Their alliance dominated the ancient worlds maritime trade routes and, from the time of King David onward, became a powerful military power on land as well. They were exceedingly blessed by God during the time of Kings David and Solomon, but a long succession of sinful kings led to a steady decline in the strength and influence of the kingdom of Israel.***

> ***During an approximately 20 year span between 740-720 B.C., the ten tribes of Israel went into foreign exile in several waves. At the beginning of this period, the Assyrians took captive the tribe of Naphtali and the Gileadite tribes of Gad, Reuben and half the tribe of Manasseh (II Kings 15:29). By circa 721 B.C., all of the ten tribes of Israel who had formed the northern kingdom of Israel had been removed from their lands (II Kings 17:18). While the house of Judah remained in the Promised Land for a time, many have puzzled over the fate and future of the ten tribes of Israel. Where did they go? While the Bible foretold that the tribes of Israel would scatter, literally, to all four directions (Genesis 28:14), the remainder of this study is devoted to [...] a confederation of tribes which emerged afterward*** [after their exile] ***in the region of South Russia: the Scythians.***

And then they became known as Scythians.

> ***It is commonly assumed by many that the ten tribes were abandoned by God, or that they died out. Neither assumption is correct.***
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> ***The ten tribes of Israel were led by the two tribes which descended from Joseph: Ephraim and Manasseh. These tribes were given the Divine birthright blessings by Jacob (later called Israel) when he died (Genesis 48:8-22). The birthright blessings remained with these tribes from that time forward. These blessings included large populations, material wealth, national power, etc., and God gave them to Abraham and his descendants unconditionally and permanently. National sins and rebelliousness could and did cause God to withdraw these blessings at times, but they could not be permanently lost. This is an important point which God himself made in a prophecy concerning the about-to-be exiled Israelites in Hosea 1.***
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> ***The prophecy in Hosea 1 was written decades before the ten tribes went into exile for their growing sinfulness. Hosea 1:1-9 prophesied that God was about to exile the ten tribes of Israel from their land...***

You should read Hosea for yourself. He was told to marry a whore and have children. He gave those children names and there was a reason behind those names

> ***...but the tribe of Judah would be allowed to remain. Most people think that this prophecy is a grim judgment on the ten tribes that God was forsaking them. However, Hosea 1:10-11 pronounces a Divine blessing that would be poured out on the ten tribes after their exile.***

Hosea 1:10-11, ***"Yet the number of the children of Israel*** [not that little land about the size of New Jersey in the Middle East] ***shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people*** [that is one of the names of the children he had]***, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God. Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be***

gathered together, and appoint themselves one head [this has not happened yet]***, and they shall come up out of the land: for great shall be the day of Jezreel."***

I will get to Jezreel in the future, it is not part of this particular section of this series.

> ***Hosea 1:10 repeats the very language of Genesis 22:17 that Abrahams descendants would be as numerous as the sand of the sea.***
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> ***This prophecy confirms that God had not forgotten his covenant with Abraham's birthright descendants. He affirmed that he would continue to pour out the blessings of the Divine birthright blessings upon the ten tribes after their exile. This promise gives us a major clue about locating the transplanted ten tribes: They must be a numerous people with large populations!***
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> ***Let us examine another clue. Genesis 21:12 prophesied that Abraham's descendants would be known by the name of Abraham's son, Isaac.***

Genesis 21:12, ***"And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman*** [remember there is a friction between Sarah and Hagar and Ishmael had to go] ***; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice*** [whatever Abraham wasn't seeing, Sarah saw behind the scenes what could possibly involve the safety and wellbeing of Isaac when he was a child]***; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called."***

'Shall' and 'called' are the same Hebrew word in that verse incidentally. It should read, 'in Isaac, name thy seed to be called'. Called what? Something that refers back to Isaac and his seed.

> ***Genesis 21:12 prophesied that Abraham's descendants would be known by the name of Abraham's son, Isaac.***
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> ***Since the birthright blessing was given to Ephraim and Manasseh, the name of Isaac would primarily be placed on these two tribes. Genesis 48:16 records that Jacob (called Israel) blessed Ephraim and Manasseh with these words: Let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac. This blessing affirms that these two tribes will bear the name of Isaac upon them throughout history. This had occurred already before the ten tribes were sent into exile. A prophecy in Amos 7:16 refers to the ten tribes of Israel (I.e. the house of Israel in verse 10) as the house of Isaac. In ancient times, vowels were not written, so the consonants of Isaac's name would be S-C or S-K (dependent on the language in which the word appeared). Applying the prophetic clue in Genesis 21:12, we need to look for the exiled ten tribes of Israel by locating tribes which have Isaac's name attached to them.***
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> ***What Direction Did the Ten Tribes Go?***

> ***It is believed that groups of migrating Israelites went to a number of diverse locations, the Bible does give us evidence that most of the exiled Israelites migrated generally to the north and east of the old Promised Land. II Kings 15:29 states that the Gileadite tribes and the tribe of Naphtali were carried captive to Assyria. The Assyrian Empire was located to the east of the kingdom of Israel, so these tribes were carried eastward into Asia. When the inhabitants of Samaria were carried captive, II Kings 17:6 states they were transplanted to the regions of Halah, Habor and the cities of the Medes. Media was long identified with the region south of the Caspian Sea, which was in a somewhat northeastern direction from Samaria, but it was still mostly eastward. The apocryphal book of II Esdras (13:39-46) records that many members of the ten tribes escaped from the Assyrians and migrated independently to a land called Arzareth. Secular evidence indicates that this was in the region of the Black Sea and the Caucasus Mountains.***
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> ***A Medieval Jewish historian named Eldad is cited as the source of a report that at the time of the fall of Samaria, the ten tribes of Israel evaded the calamity, going off with their flocks, and turning nomads, and that the chief whom they appointed could muster 120,000 horse and 100,000 foot. To be escorted by 220,000 soldiers, the main body of escaping Israelites must have numbered well over a million people.***

Some tribes were taken and some decided to leave on their own, escape Samaria and head north; and they did with a large amount of people in tow.

> ***The Black Sea region to which they are reputed to have escaped is almost straight north of the old kingdom of Israel.***

We usually see maps as flat, but if you have a rounded map, you would see that as almost directly north of Israel.

> ***The Bible has an account which indicates that Eldad's report is factual. In Jeremiah 3, God sent a message of reconciliation to the ten tribes of Israel even as he proclaimed that the end of the kingdom of Judah was near. These messages to Israel and Judah were given approximately a century after the ten tribes went into exile.***
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> ***It is most noteworthy that God told Jeremiah that the message to the ten tribes (I.e. Israel), should be sent to the north. God knew where the ten tribes were a century after their exile and he told Jeremiah that they lived to the north of Jeremiah's location in Jerusalem. Draw a line northward from Jerusalem and you will come to the Black Sea region, exactly where ancient sources place a large body of migrating Israelites. The people living in that region were known as Scythian or Sacae tribes.***

Remember, vowels were not written in ancient times, so they used the consonants S-C or S-K. They were 'known as' the Scythians or Sacae tribes.

Were these the Israelite tribes?

Let's go to Jeremiah 3 to verify in Scripture. It deals with the unfaithfulness of both houses, and then we get to verses 11-14.

"And the LORD said unto me, The backsliding Israel hath justified herself more than treacherous Judah. Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the LORD; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the LORD, and I will not keep anger for ever. Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the LORD thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the LORD. Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion..."

Most people read through this Jeremiah section and believe the House of Israel was still in their northern kingdom areas, where the ten tribes existed in Israel. But when you put this in a timeline, it creates a problem because it was written 100 years after the exile and the tribes were no longer there. So who is Jeremiah saying this to; "***Go and proclaim these words toward the north".*** The 'north' had to be something further north than where the House of Israel existed 100 years prior. ***Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the LORD; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the LORD, and I will not keep anger for ever.***

You can read the bible through in a year if you want, but if you don't put it in context, if you don't put it in a timeline, a lot of this is going to go right over your head and you'll miss the important facts—and that is what it is, a factual history timeline being laid down that points to something besides what some people believe is still existing in Israel when Jeremiah wrote this. I'm sorry, the ten tribes are not there. That has been proven. That is already history.

So where did the backsliding House of Israel go? To the north first (or second depending on where they were coming from, from their exile point). And of course, if they are north, then we have to understand where they went and what they became known as. I say they became 'known as' the Scythians or the Sacae tribes (and there were different groups of them), and they gave the Assyrians a hell of a run for their money—not the ones that were still in exile, but the ones that came out of exile. They eventually escaped through the Caspian and Black sea areas, and that is why there are three groups of Scythians of different tribes. But the ones that went out of the northern area of the House of Israel, where the ten tribes of the north existed, and escaped into those areas of the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea before they were captured by the Assyrians, they were still in a backslidden condition, that is why Jeremiah is writing to them and saying, "Return oh backslidden Israel." .

This is just an introduction into the Scythians. I will go a little bit further into who the Scythians were and I will point out a few important facts that really identifies who they were. They were the Lost Tribes of Israel.

God is faithful. He gave plenty of warning. His rebellious people didn’t give heed to the warning and they were disciplined. He divorced them, but he couldn’t stay divorced. And there is a whole slew of promises of how He would reconnect with them again. And He has.

To be continued...

The Last Days Study Guide

The Scythians

1. While God's promises are unconditional, what affect can rebellion and sin have on those promises?
2. If the Lost Tribes are literal Scythians, what would Ezekiel be stating about this war?
3. If Gog of Magog are the Scythians, what would Ezekiel be stating about this war?
4. Name the historian misquoted in the book The Destiny of Nations?
5. Who began the Russian state?
6. What does 'son of man' mean in Ezekiel 38:1?
7. What was the capital of Lydia?
8. Approximately how long did it take for the House of Israel to be taken into captivity?
9. What prophet was sent to the Black Sea region 100 years after the House of Israel was exiled?
10. Give the causes for the destruction of the Assyrian Empire.
11. Why should Genesis 21:12 read, "in Isaac name thy seed to be called"?
12. Where were the inhabitants of Samaria transplanted?
13. Who informs us that some of the House of Israel evaded captivity?
14. The House of Israel became known as Scythians or _____.

What does this study reveal about the nature of God?